/502 cont./

415 water from nearby streams and lagoons in the large bark buckets (216).

216. These bark receptacles are mentioned and described in Cañas Pinochet:358, Dabbene (b):181, Hyades (q):307, Lothrop (b):131, Martial:192, Spegazzini (a):163, Wieghardt: 27, and others.

11. Baskets

The baskets are excellently adapted for collecting and storing the always wet shellfish. These baskets lie around in the huts and in the canoes /503/ of our Fuegians in larger numbers than /Fig. 49 appears here/ among the Selk'nam. [422 462] They are the property of the woman because they were made by her. Only women and girls, less often boys, reach for them when mussels and snails, berries, and fruits are to be gathered; a man never carries a basket in his hand.

●285 Judged according to weaving technique, our Indians have three different kinds. I believe I must adhere to this grouping, although Lothrop (b):138 speaks of four kinds. Below, a net-like container, čaɯwénux, čaɯwénuš, will be described, which he and others regard as a basket.

[824]

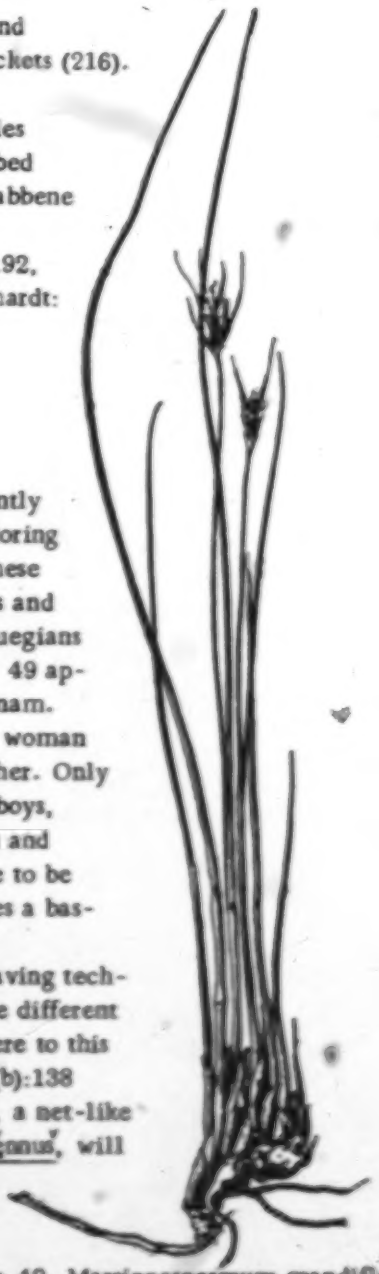

Fig. 49. Marsippospermum grandiflorum.

/503 cont./

285 In my opinion, however, this view is not justified, since the individual rush stalks are not braided in this case, but stretched in parallel rows. It is used like a sieve-shaped scoop on a long handle. The three actual baskets (217) show a coil construction

217. To be sure Bridges writes: "The woman has three kinds of baskets, called respectively touwella, cijim and jow-wunnoosh" /cited in English/ (MM:III, 115; 1869); obviously he did not at that time know how to distinguish accurately between the designations. The observation of Hyades (h):5 was inadequate. He asserts that "the baskets are of two kinds; the one with fine meshes is called taouala, the other, loosely meshed, is called kafdjime" /translated from French/. Lovisato (b):140 speaks of three kinds, and Cooper: 204 agrees.

in their weave. Seen in profile, they show a very definite short-oval outline.

[324] The native rushes, Marsippospermum grandiflorum, known as máipi, are used exclusively. This species flourishes abundantly in swamp and moor, has a sturdy, round stem, reaches a height of 50 centimeters, and is dark green (Fig. 49). The Indian woman, with a single jerk, pulls out three to five stalks and places them together in a bunch. She gathers at one time only as much as she can conveniently grasp with one hand, for dried stalks break easily and are no longer suitable for braiding. In her hut she arranges smaller bunches of about 20 stalks, grasps each of them with both hands, and holds the lower part in the fire where it burns down to within /504/ five centimeters of the root. At the same time she quickly draws the length of it through the flame. The heat makes the hard but damp stalk extraordinarily flexible. Without delay, while this little bunch is still hot, she bends it downward in the middle, takes this middle section between her teeth and twists the free ends spirally lengthwise. Then she immediately loosens this braid of rushes and stretches the little

/504 cont./

285 bundle straight, pulling the two ends and stripping the whole thing with her hands almost closed. The individual stalks are still hot, for the Indian woman does all these manipulations very quickly. One marvels at the flexibility of the rush stalks which just a moment before were quite stiff and hard. They remain flexible for several days during which time they must be woven. Before it is worked into the basket, the Indian woman pulls each individual stalk between her teeth lightly, in order to flatten it. She does not, however, bite hard enough to press out the juice. This treatment finally makes the stalk quite pliable. Rush stalks that were pulled up and allowed to lie around for more than a week without being used are worthless. Moreover, those that were unevenly warmed lying in the sun or beside the fire are thrown aside.

[412] The Indian woman does not need any special implement for basketry. The only thing she constantly picks up is a small pointed stick the length of a finger, or a short bone awl. With this she makes a small hole in the weave, through which she draws the running stalk and pulls it tight. The basketry is carried out according to a unified method which, however, allows three variations for which there are separate designations.

1. Tauwēla: This is the most common and the best known basketwork of Tierra del Fuego (218). The Indian woman begins

> 218. Cooper:204, agreeing, says: "The common form of basketry found among the three Fuegian tribes is of the half-hitch coiled variety made of rush with or without foundation" /cited in English/.

by placing together four or five rush stalks and rolling the end of this little bundle around her left index finger. She immediately draws off the ring and winds a stalk around it by means of half-hitches. This ring will form the center and the lowest portion of the basket (Fig. 50). As soon as the ring is closed, the weave begins according to the knotting method known as tauwēla. For the small thin bundle or roll of four or five stalks which the Indian woman constantly uses, she purposely selects stalks of different

/504 cont./

285 lengths. Before one roll is covered with knotting, she pushes in a new one. In this way she avoids having the entire roll /505/ start at a single point. The loops which are now made over this roll with a running stalk, frequently renewed, are more or less perpendicular to the roll. The simple half-hitch weave continues in spiral progression and, of course, runs clockwise. The last section of the free end of the running stalk is bent back several times and shoved under a knot which is pulled tight. At first the woman increases the number of loops on each woven ring and thus the weaving expands from below upward; more than halfway

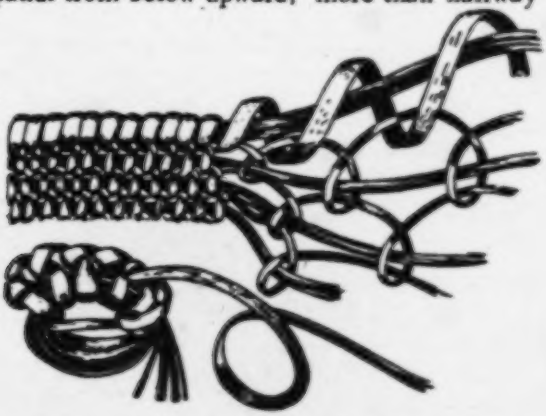

Fig. 50. The Tight Basket Weave. Natural size.

up a slight narrowing sets in once more (219).

[171]

219. The basket made according to this weaving technique is the only form which the Selk'nam also know how to make (Vol. I, 256).

Soon after the /Fig. 50 appears here/ first coils are finished, the woman wants both her hands free for the work. With a sinew, a small leather strap, or a rush stalk, she hangs her basketwork up somewhere, either on a post of the hut frame or on a short stick which she pounds into the ground. She hangs it in such a way that the opening of the basket is turned toward the ground. She draws the cord by which it hangs through the small hole that she left at the

285 /505 cont./
beginning as the lowest point of the basket. Thus hung up, the basketwork is extraordinarily mobile and can be taken up at any point at which she wishes to continue the tedious work.

When the Indian woman feels that it is large enough, she thickens the regular roll of rush stalks somewhat for the edge and draws over it a somewhat wider rush as a running thread. On this she afterwards puts two low ears opposite each other which are also bound spirally with a wide rush stalk. The two ears are joined by a cord braided out of a few stalks, sometimes also by a small narrow strap, for a handle (220). One finds this basket in all sizes

220. To his description of this weaving technique, Lothrop (b):136 adds a few comparative comments and mentions: "The hitch-coil is typical in South America only of the Yahgan, Ona, and Alacaluf, but it turns up sometimes in the Amazon valley and to the northward" /cited in English/.

[171]

and corresponding widths, with a height of eight to 30 centimeters.

/506/ 2. Čefkálax: The basket with the loose weave, as I should like to designate this particular type, is by far made less often than tawčla (221). The reason for this, I was told, is that

221. Lothrop (b):136 confirms this from his own experience: "This weave is very rarely employed among the Yahgan, and a single specimen was secured only with difficulty" /cited in English/.

it is less durable than the other, but that it nevertheless requires almost the same amount of work to make and cannot be used for many requirements. The distinguishing characteristic of the basketry technique shown in tawčla also predominates in čefkálax, which Lothrop (b):136 calls ulofnastiba. Both are exactly the same at the very beginning. The only difference between them is that in this case the running rush stalk which makes the knotting

/506 cont./

285 is each time drawn around the smooth bundle of rushes /Fig. 51 appears here/, not with a simple half-hitch but with a horizontal twisted loop (Fig. 51). This prevents the individual coils from fitting very tightly to one another, and the weave itself remains somewhat looser than in the case of tagwéla. This basket, too, has two low ears at opposite sides of the rim, which are joined by a loose handle of braided rush stalks. The čefiyálay that one sees most frequently is about 22 centimeters high, and as a rule it is never as carefully worked nor as even over its entire surface as the tight weave of tagwéla.

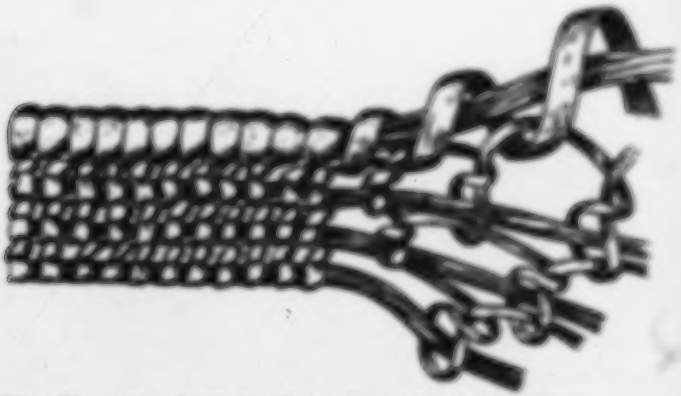

Fig. 51. Rim Section of the Loose Basket Weave. Natural size.

3. Kájim: We realize at first glance that this type is different from the two other baskets mentioned. This weave can be referred to as open. Lothrop (b):138 calls it "a knotted weave without any foundation" /cited in English/. It is nothing more than a progressive number of knotted loops tied together in regular succession (Fig. 52). Certain coils, however, are not pulled tight, and they thus produce circles which hang in rows one above the other. These hold bunches of about /507/ five loose rush stalks (222). A diagram of this pattern is shown

222. Neither Hyades (b):4 nor Lothrop (b):138 refer to this in their descriptions or in their drawings.

in Figure 53. In order to reinforce this loose weave somewhat and keep

/307 cont./

285 [307] is wide open, a narrow wooden loop is drawn through the top row of coils which are loose here. This loop is preferably cut from a stem of the pliable, tough Berberis Nevadensis. The entire loose weave is lightly and flexibly suspended from it. /Figure 32 appears here./ A handle made of three braided rush strings is fastened to the wooden loop. These strings are knotted together at the highest point where they meet.

Since the baskets are not only used a great deal, but also

Fig. 32. Rim Section of the Open Basket Weave. Natural size.

285 [94] easily damaged, every Indian woman always has several of them. In her free moments she is constantly busy /Fig. 33 appears here/ with her basketry. Just as in Europe a housewife who sits down to rest for a bit or chats confidentially with another person will take out her knitting, so the Pomgies women in a similar situation turns to her basketry. It is hard to judge how many hours she spends on a basket, for she fills every odd different intervals of time with this occupation. Sometimes her already weary hands will move slowly; some women are extraordinarily deft at it. A capable basket-weaver

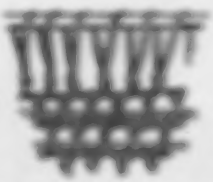

Fig. 33. The Open Basket-work.

285

/507 cont./

285 is referred to as yetánakípa or yetanáalitéskípa (223). (Compare

223. According to BD:650 it is the equivalent of "clever, expert in yetanaing, well yetanaed" /cited in English/.

yetína, "to make a basket," according to BD:650.)

/508/ Naturally, the execution of one basket will sometimes be very different from that of another, depending on the facility which this or that Indian woman has acquired. In order to keep the final shape as symmetrical as possible, as soon as the weaving is finished the little basket is packed with fresh grass or moss that is not too wet. It is supposed to dry slowly, for some distortion would be unavoidable if it dried too rapidly. When this packing is removed after three or four weeks, the little basket is immediately used. In the weeks following it will discolor and become a uniform straw-yellow. It is used so much that it is, of course, repeatedly soaked and bruised, but the Indian woman sees to it that in drying it returns to its original even shape. No one handles the little baskets carefully (224).

224. A detailed description of these three baskets classified according to the weaving technique is found in Lothrop (b):133. Compare Dabbene (b):181, Outes (g):53, and Wieghardt:27. Hyades (q):303 made a list of pertinent designations.

Since the weaving technique is similar among the Selk'nam and Yamana and the names for it coincide somewhat among the two tribes, Cooper:204 concludes that "the Onas have perhaps borrowed this cultural element from the Canoe Indians" /cited in English/. I shall comment on this somewhat critically in Volume III of this monograph.

/350 cont./

226 limitless voracity, finally the remainder decays. As soon as the mourning stench becomes somewhat more penetrating, the many people that have assembled quickly leave the place and scatter in all directions.

/351/ Sometimes similar shoals of fish (Clupea sprattus and Clupea pectinata) travel into the inner channels or encircle larger inlets without running up on the beach. The Indians clearly recognize them by their numerous and varied followers. As quickly as possible they now steer the shoal and try to approach it from the side without getting into the throng. With a special basket known as čexwinux (Fig. 65) (291).

[227 285]

291. In order to avoid confusion, I shall retain the designation "fishing basket," because it is made of the same type of rush (Marsippospermum grandiflorum) as the other three types of baskets, but without a complex weave of the rush stalks. Compare Hyades (q):272. Lothrop (b):180 called it "Fish-net" /cited in English/.

[224]

Fig. 65. Fishing Basket. One third natural size.

/Fig. 65 appears here/ they scoop the small fish directly out of the water into their canoe. While one of the women tends to the vessel, the other sticks the loose fishing-basket on the end of a pole about one and a half meters long. She grasps the lower end of the pole and, from the canoe, draws the upper part with the basket through the water as though the whole thing were a large ladle. The woman handles it carefully so that the basket does not slide off. Only when it is barely above the bottom of the canoe does she let the basket,

/1402 cont./

312 that are regarded as beautiful among the Yamana. Spegazzini (e):165 refers to this specifically. The various types of ornaments are supposed to increase the allure of physical beauty. The impulse for this sort of thing /1403/ varies according to the person, his age and sex, but coincides almost exactly with what one observes in Europe under the same circumstances.

Fig. 101. A Well-made Little Basket.

317 In making implements and utensils, weapons and ornaments, everyone tries to achieve a certain degree of symmetry, mainly because it is agreeable to his eye and feelings. There are even special designations for persons who make certain things perfectly and according to the rules of good workmanship. Some of these expressions are based merely on considerations of usefulness. They use the word wiikyéus, "clever, expert, careful in cutting up a

2: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 5905 Yahgan 5256

501 of several skins sewn together, was sometimes set up—a practice whose origin, native or European, is uncertain. (For details on manufacture and use of canoe, cf.: Lothrop, 1928, pp. 143-145; 1932 a, pp. 380-388; Gusinde, 1937, pp. 426-427.)

501 1931 After about 1880 the *Yahgan* began to give up their traditional bark canoe, and to adopt the dugout. Still later, prior to Lothrop's visit in 1924-25, the dugout had been entirely superseded by the dory, of European type and origin.

The *Yahgan* never adopted the plank boat from their *Alacaluf* neighbors and never used rafts or skin-covered watercraft, so far as our records reveal.

MANUFACTURES

272. Pottery, weaving, and metallurgy were entirely absent; no traces of pottery have been discovered archeologically in *Yahgan* territory.

283 **Skin-working and sewing.**—Plant fibers, plain, shredded, or braided, were used in basket making, canoe sewing, and for mooring lines, respectively; braided whale sinew, for netlines, fishing lines, and tool and weapon lashings; braided guanaco sinew, for bowstrings; whalebone, in sewing canoes and for bird arrows and fishfin arrows; and hide thongs, for tool and weapon lashings, harpoon lines, basket handles, mooring lines, and bowstrings. Awls were made of bone and wood, unhafted. The drill was lacking.

285 **Basketry.**—Four techniques in basket making were in use: (1) Simple half-hitch coiled, the commonest type (fig. 10, *top*); (2) twisted half-hitch coiled, rarer (fig. 10, *center*); (3) knotted half-hitch coiled, not common (fig. 10, *bottom*); (4) a sort of wrapped type. The first three were of excellent craftsmanship; the last, very crudely woven, and used only as a dip net for catching very small fish. The material for all four was a rush (*Juncus megalocarpus*). The coiled baskets were more or less oblong-spheroid in shape, and had a carrying handle of thong or plaited rush (pl. 10, *c*).

281 **Skin dressing.**—No process of dressing pelage is reported. Seal skins were stretched on the ground, covered with grass and moss, and left so for a while, to help dehair them. Drying frames were apparently used. The scraper consisted of a mussel shell lashed to a cylindrical stone haft. The *Yahgan* made thongs flexible by drawing them through their teeth or by chewing them.

324 **Stoneworking.**—Little use of worked stone was made except for arrowheads and, rarely, scrapers. The workmanship was crude. Archeologically, there are some traces of stone pecking and polishing (Lothrop, 1928, p. 302; cf. Bird, 1938).

415 **Containers.**—Cylindrical baskets (pl. 10, *c*), of *Rostkowia hainanica* bark, for carrying and holding drinking water and for boiling, were made by the women, with the use of a hacking tool dis-

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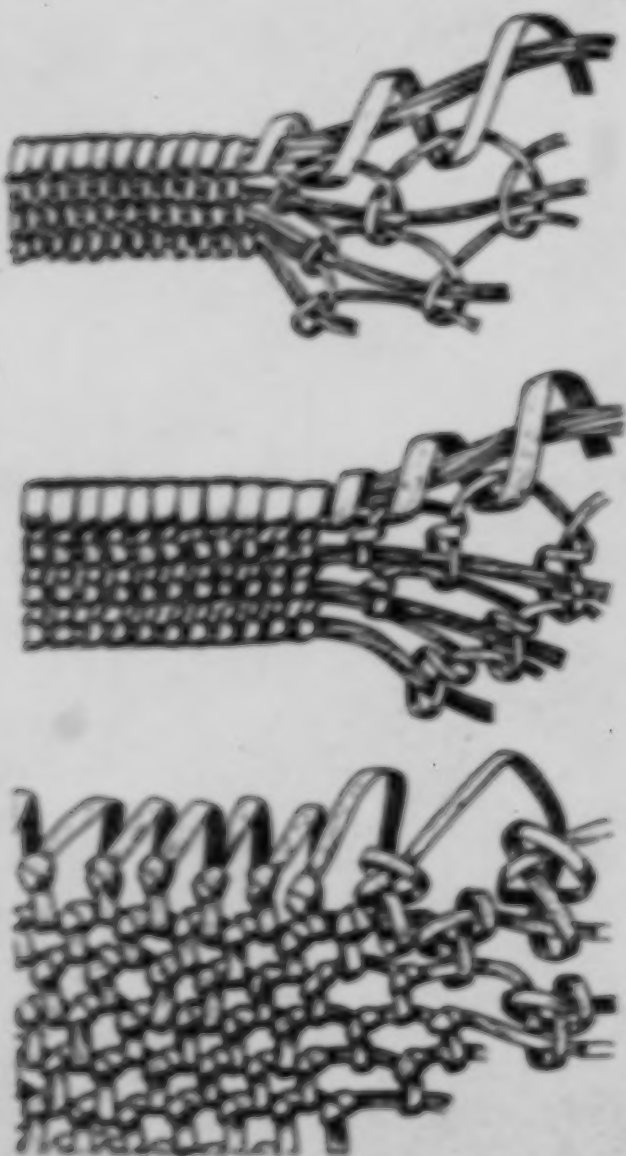

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

9. Pouches and Bags.—For storage the Yahgan used various pouches, bags, and baskets. While there seems to have been a tendency to employ the most readily available material, at the same time certain definite types of bags were normally used for distinct purposes. For general storage, bags were made from the skins of the seal, penguin, and guanaco. For keeping the fire-making apparatus, a small guanaco-hide bag covered with red paint was used (fig. 53, *b*). A larger bag of guanaco-hide (*humulúf*) covered with white paint was employed by the shaman to store his ritualistic paraphernalia (fig. 94). For porpoise- or whale-oil, containers were made from water-proof substances, such as seal-gut (*kália*), seal-bladder (*athhlaháni*), or a species of giant kelp (*shówen*) which grows around the seaward islands. In fig. 58 we illustrate

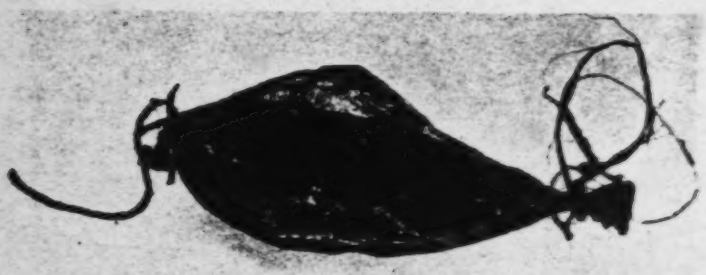

Fig. 58.—Yahgan seal-bladder oil container. Length, 7¼ in. (14/2338)

an oil container of seal-gut. Red paint they habitually stored in small sacks (*yái*) made from the throats of seal (fig. 54, *c*). A recent invention is the otter-tail pouch (*yeten*) employed at the present time for carrying tobacco.

10. Baskets.—All the Canoe Indians of Tierra del Fuego and the west coast of Chile to the north make baskets. This art is probably the most intricate technological achievement of the Yahgan, Alacaluf, and Chono, so that we shall consider the making of baskets in some detail. Among the Yahgan, the writer found that four types were manufactured, of which only one has been adequately described. Two of these are based on half-hitches around a coiled foundation; one has half-hitches without foundation; while the fourth, employed as a dip-net, is a wrapped stitch.

The material used for all four kinds of baskets is a native grass

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

(*Juncus magellanicus*) known to the Yahgan as *mápi*. This is a coarse, round-stemmed grass, about 18 inches in height, which resembles the grass of our saltwater marshes. It is picked by the women and carried to the encampment in long bundles. The handsomest baskets are those woven in the fall when the frost has changed the greens to red, but this brilliant color fades after a few weeks. During the course of manufacture, each grass-stem is chewed to flatten it and to make it more pliable.

FIG. 59.—Yahgan basket of *tawĕ'la* type. Height, 6 in. (14/2317)

In discussing the various kinds of Yahgan baskets below, the different weaves have been designated by their native names. These types are:

a. *Tawĕ'la*.—This class of basketry, normally called "Fuegian basketry" in ethnological literature, is by far the commonest kind in use (fig. 59). It may be described as a half-hitch or buttonhole stitch over a coiled foundation.

The process of manufacture starts with selecting three or four stems of grass, placing them together, and bending them to form a little circle about half an inch in diameter which becomes the bottom of the basket. The loose stems forming this circle are

FIG. 60.—Method of beginning a *tawĕ'la* basket. (14/2319)

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

then lashed in place by a series of half-hitches, which leave the part of the foundation stems not included in the circle projecting at a tangent from it. Fig. 60 illustrates this initial step in the manufacturing process.

Next the projecting grass-stems are bent to form a second circle around the original one. In this position they are lashed by a second series of half-hitches, which are inserted through the loops of the first row with the aid of an awl (fig. 69). This process may be studied in fig. 61. It is repeated, additional grass-stems being

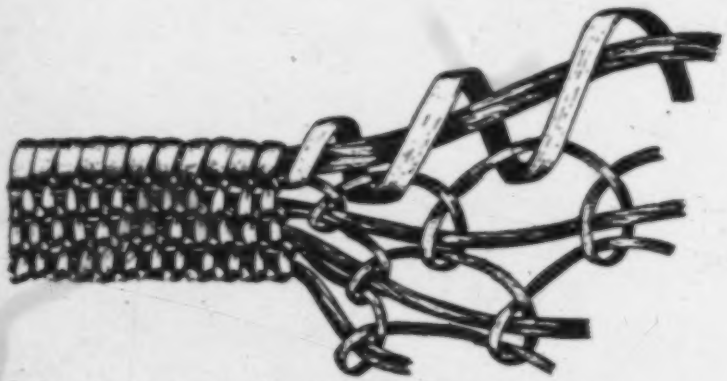

FIG. 61.—Detail of *tow'la* basket. Height, 1 in. (14/2288)

added as necessary, until a circular piece of woven material two or three inches in diameter is created.

At this stage it becomes necessary to curve the sides of the basket, so the finished fragment is suspended at a suitable height by passing a cord through the hole in the center of the base and tying it to a small toggle. In this position, mouth downward, both hands are free for the weaving, and the foundation coils can be controlled to give the desired shape.

When the body of the basket has been completed, the edge is finished by a simple spiral wrapping considerably broader than is used in the rest of the weaving.

Next, two loops are attached at opposite points of the rim, and also are covered with spiral wrappings. To these loops a handle of braided grass is fastened, and the basket is completed.

In comment on this kind of basket we should point out that

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

coiled baskets are found along the entire west side of the New World in practically unbroken distribution, and also to the west across the Pacific. The Fuegian or half-hitch coil is also found across the Pacific, a fact that has given rise to much unrestrained speculation on the origin of the Fuegians. Variants of the half-hitched coil, somewhat similar to the *uloánastábo* basket presently to be described, have been noted by the writer in Basket-maker collections from the Southwest and in collections from Kentucky caves, both of great antiquity.

Several authorities have argued that coiled basketry is not a very ancient type. With this the writer does not agree, because, in the New World at least, coiled basketry is the most widely distributed kind known, and also because it is almost the only type of basketry associated with the most ancient New World archeo-

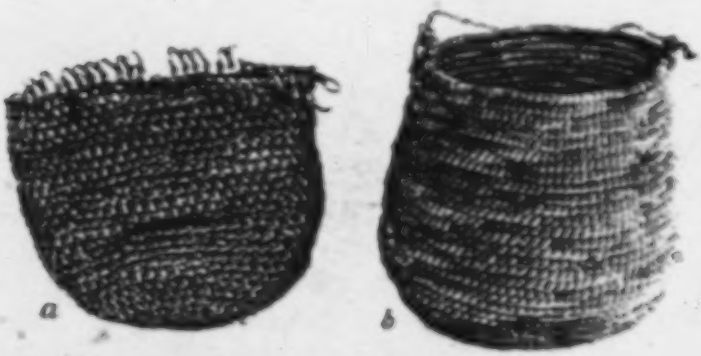

FIG. 62.—Yahgan baskets of *gaíchim* and *uloánastábo* types. Height of *b*, 6¼ in. (14/2312, 2288)

logical finds now known. In other words, it seems to the writer that one would expect *a priori* that the basketry of an isolated and backward people like the Yahgan would be of the coiled variety.

The hitch-coil is typical in South America only of the Yahgan, Ona, and Alacaluf, but it turns up sometimes in the Amazon valley and to the northward. A Surinam hat illustrated by Goeje[1] is woven in a fashion exactly like the Yahgan *kuwílla*.

b. *Uloánastábo*.—This weave, illustrated in figs. 62, *b*, and 63, is very rarely employed among the Yahgan, and a single specimen

[1] *Intern. Archiv für Ethnog.*, Bd. XVII, Suppl., 1906, pl. IX, fig. 13.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

was secured only with difficulty. Like the *tawĭ'la* weave it is a series of half-hitches built up over a coiled foundation, and the steps taken in the manufacture of the two types are the same. Also the rims and the handles in both types are identical.

FIG. 63.—Detail of *ulodwastĭlu* basket. Height, 1 in. (14/2317)

The difference between the *tawĭ'la* and the *ulodwastĭlu* lies in the fact that the former is a simple half-hitch while the latter is a twisted half-hitch, for at each knot the weft takes a half-turn around itself. This distinction may be seen by comparing figs. 61 and 63.

More elaborate twisted-hitched-coiled baskets are found in Central America, notably among the Pipil and Lenca of Salvador, in collections from Pacific islands near the meeting point of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, also in Africa, and among Bush negroes in the Guianas, and doubtless elsewhere. This world-wide distribution of the type leads to the belief that it may be an ancient form of basketry. The only exact New World parallel to the *ulodwastĭlu* which has come to the attention of the writer is an Alaskan specimen illustrated by Mason,[1] a bark vessel to which a wooden lip has been sewn in a manner identical with the Yahgan stitch.

[1] Aboriginal American Basketry, *Rep. U. S. Nat. Mus. for 1902*, fig. 90, Washington, 1904.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

c. *Gailchim*.—A third class of Yahgan basketry, not very common at least in recent years, may be described as a knotted weave without any foundation (fig. 65). The body of the basket is built up in a series of interlocking knotted loops, resulting in a soft and flexible container (fig. 62, *a*). In order to stiffen the basket and to secure a wide-open mouth, the rim is finished off in a series of loops and in these a circle of wood —Winter's bark or barberry—is inserted, as shown in fig. 64. To this rim is attached a three-member braided handle.

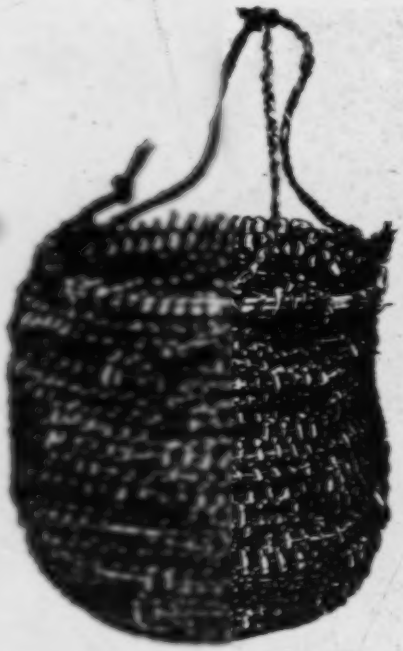

FIG. 64.—Yahgan basket of *gailchim* type. (Negat. no. 34/2313)

When completed the *gailchim* often shows irregularities, so the interior is packed tightly with sand or small pebbles which are kept moist until the basket has assumed a symmetrical shape. The result of this stretching process is seen by comparing figs. 62, *a*, and 64.

d. *Chiunnish*.—A fourth type of Yahgan basket, illustrated in fig. 89, was lashed to a pole and used as a dip-net for catching small fish. The completed net with the handle may be seen in the bow of the model canoe in fig. 73.

The *chiunnish* consists of a circular opening of Winter's bark or barberry wood, to which four U-shape members of the same material were secured. The interstices were then filled in with strips of grass of the kind above indicated, looped about the solid frame.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

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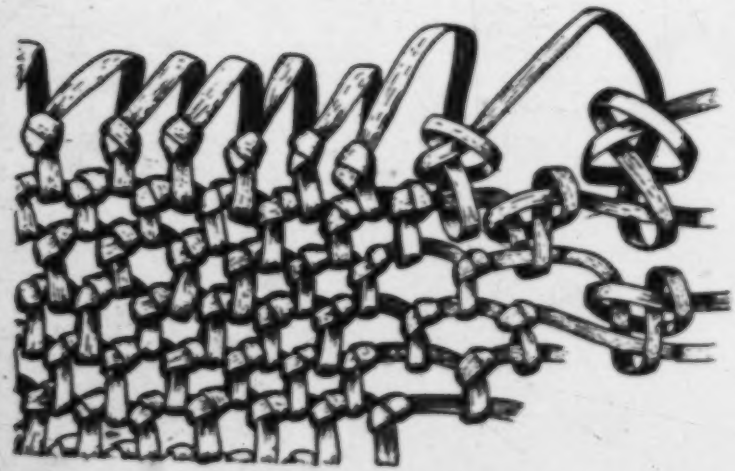

FIG. 65.—Detail of *goilchim* basket. Height, 2 in. (14/2312)

TOOLS

Yahgan tools are just as primitive as the Ona tools, although adapted to different uses. The Yahgan have a constant tendency when making something to pick up the first object that comes to hand—a bit of shell, a fire-flaked stone—and employ it, rather than to take the trouble to get steel tools which would better serve their purpose.

1. SCRAPER.—The old-time Yahgan scraper (*tu'wĕ'ns*) was a mussel-shell blade (*hálaf*) set on a stone handle (*dwi*). The shell blade was not the ordinary mussel-shell, but a giant variety (*chia-múnku*), four or five inches in length, which now grows on the beaches of the outer islands toward the Antarctic. Formerly, however, it must have flourished on Beagle channel, as many examples were found in the interior of a shellheap at Harberton. To set this shell blade on the stone handle, the edges of the base of the shell were carefully broken away in order to reduce the curve and make the blade lie flat against the stone. However, the blade could not be attached directly to the stone, or it would have broken too easily, hence it was bedded on a small bunch of shredded barberry wood (*chĕlerr* [1]) or a wad of moss (*hánakŏkl*). These two

[1] This word was obtained from a Lennox islander. I am not certain whether it means "shredded barberry" or whether it is a dialectic variant of the central

1: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH5 Tehuelche
Yahgan SH6

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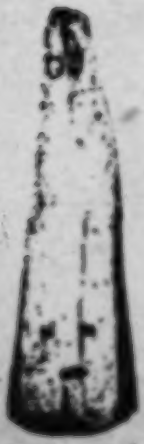

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